Nothing else is so deceitful as a perverted will. It is more cunning than the most expert thief, craftier than the deepest politician, more artful than the wiliest hypocrite, more plausible than the most skilful flatterer. If we must sometimes be on our guard against the treachery of our fellow-men, it behoves us to exercise a still more watchful jealousy over ourselves.

Every wise man is sensitive as to the first approaches of that flattery which interested parties give him, but we have all greater cause to dread the flattery which the deceitful heart is sending up as incense. Others, in their attempts to deceive us, can have access to us only at certain times, and in particular ways; but the heart presents its delusive suggestions at all times, and by an infinite variety of channels. Much as there is among us of deception, of the deception of one man by his neighbour, there is much more of self-deception. Of all flattery, self-flattery is the most common.

And what is the general result of all this willing self-deceit? The man becomes full of himself, of his past conduct, his present character, and his purposes for the future. He constructs for himself a fictitious character of extraordinary excellence, which he is bound to admire. " Surely every man walketh in a vain show." A state of things is produced, as delusive as the scenes of a novel, as deceptive as the exhibitions of the stage; and he moves in the midst of them as a hero. The glare of lamps in a theatre, the curtains raised and dropped at the appropriate time, the perspective, the dresses, the personifications in tone and manner, do not so deceive the spectator, and call up feelings so unsnited to the reality, as the stage pictures and actings which the fancy creates at the bidding of the will—and all that men may be able to personate a character which they do not possess, and to admire themselves in that character. Nor can there be a greater contrast between the possibly mean,

mercenary, villanous actor and the noble character personified by him, between the actress of doubtful reputation and the chastity which she represents, than there is between the real man with, his sins and the magnanimous hero pictured in his imagination. The mind is deceived by the one exhibition as by the other ; and as the actor receives plaudits for the generosity of the sentiments uttered by him, and the actress excites sympathy from the sufferings which die is supposed to undergo, so do mankind claim the admiration